

Stretching out my grocery shop



My social media feed is full of ideas on how to use all this extra time in confinement. For those of us working from home, that extra time can seem elusive. But the last place I want to spend that time is at the supermarket. So here I list a few of the things I have tried to eat well on one weekly or fortnightly grocery shop. Some of these are super quick, while others are a soothing break or a good project for kids.

Eat the whole vegetable. Did you know that the radish leaves are more nutritious¹ than the radish itself? Try [this recipe](#) to use them in a pesto. I've also made pesto with carrot tops, by blending them with some oil, a clove of garlic, a little vinegar, some chopped nuts and a little bit of salt. Make it the first day or so after you shop, as the leaves go droopy quickly. To store any pesto in the fridge for up to a week or so, pop it in a jar and cover it with a thin layer of oil. I think it makes a yummy topping for roast vegetable salad. You can also stir-fry radish leaves, but I don't recommend frying carrot tops – chewing them made me wish I was a ruminant.

Be a mini gardener. [Sprout some seeds](#), or start some herbs on your windowsill. I saved a stick of thyme and put the cutting in some soil. You can do the same for other woody herbs like sage and rosemary. For soft herbs, like mint and basil, I put a stem in water and waited for it to grow roots before planting it into soil.

DIY. I can vouch for '[milk](#)' made from oats if you have a blender. If you aren't ready to be a sourdough master, but are trying to go to the boulangerie less, try [flatbread](#). It's pretty easy and satisfying. I made mine with just flour, water, salt and a little oil. You could try chickpea or corn flour too. Enjoy your flatbread with soups or curries or wrap them round some beans and salad. I also looked up a recipe for flan...but I think I might just wait for my next shopping trip!

¹ Because we believe in science-based recommendations, I did check this claim: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iff.2015.04.049>

Pickle or prep.

If your freezer is only just big enough for one tub of ice cream, strategically you should reserve the freezer for that very important purpose!

But that doesn't mean it's impossible to prepare some things to make your workday easier. I quick-pickled [vegetables](#) to keep in the fridge and if you want to go next level, you could preserve stock or soup using a canning method.

Give canned and dried foods a chance. Don't go all-in here and buy more than one can of something you wouldn't normally eat. It turns out I don't like canned French 'cassoulet' any more than I like canned Australian 'casserole', seeming to disprove the theory that everything tastes better with a French accent. On the other hand, both the preserved and dried mushrooms I bought were delicious in risotto, and tinned sardines made for some tasty fishcakes.

Eat soft foods first. Planning and food storage don't really get me excited, but I'm making progress. For the first few days after shopping, I base my meals around softer vegetables, like salad leaves and leafy herbs, and snack on any fruit, like berries, that go bad quickly. I plan to eat things that keep longer, like apples, potatoes, pumpkin, cabbage and frozen peas, toward the end of the week. This is harder if you live with other people who always seem to leave the lettuce to go limp at the back of the fridge. You could try to turn cooking with a 'challenge ingredient' into a household competition, or getting kids to pack a lunchbox of daily snacks during quarantine. Bonus points if this reduces the number of times you hear 'Mum/Dad I'm hungry...' during the workday! Be gentle on yourself too – this is not the time to panic about one lettuce ending up in the compost.

Have you tried any new food ideas since social distancing measures and lockdowns came in? No matter your circumstances, we're all dealing with new routines. Some of us are trying to recreate our favourite foods to counter homesickness, while others look to new recipes for the sense of adventure we get from travel. Or you might be making the most of the chance to order takeaway delivered to your door. Whatever the case is for you, I'd love to hear how it's going.



Lettuce growing from seed, and thyme and sage grown from cuttings. My window box garden isn't a solution to world hunger but watching something grow does make me feel happier. I have grown enough mint for a daily cup of tea, which makes for a refreshing afternoon break.

We wish to thank our colleague Heidi Congdon for submitting this article to the OIE News Team.

■ OIE In-house Times – 30 April 2020